

# PEOPLE & THINGS

ONE of the surprises in store for the Russians in their meetings with Dr.

Adenauer is the vivid and highly un-German personality of Herr Felix von Eckardt, the recently appointed West German Ambassador to the United Nations, who is one of the team of experts who have accompanied the Chancellor to Moscow.

During his recent two years as head of the Federal Information Office in Bonn Herr von Eckardt impressed alike by his friendly and informal approach, his unaffected partiality for embroidered waistcoats (many of them bought in the Burlington Arcade), and his imposing collection of exotic birds and tropical fish. His office was decorated not only with modern paintings, many of which exasperated his senior colleagues, but with a live parrot whose throaty "Guten Tag!" was familiar to every visitor.

Herr von Eckardt is not, in the strict sense, a career diplomatist, though he served as such, under the Weimar Republic. His family, for four generations, has inclined rather towards the worlds of poetry and journalism; and if Herr von Eckardt is now a substantial landowner (in Mecklenburg) he owes this not to inheritance but to the great success which he enjoyed, at an earlier stage in life, as a film script-writer.

Altogether I doubt if the Russians will have taken the measure, in advance, of their visitor.

## A Matter of Trust

I DOUBT if there is any institution, at this moment, which contributes as much as the National Trust to the amenity of English life. Primarily, of course, it exists to preserve; but in doing so it provides us with a short list of excellences which is invaluable to connoisseur and vagabond alike.

The migrant wader, the grey wether, the fortified headland, the Jacob's sheep—all are the safer for the Trust's existence; Knoles and Stourhead benefit by it; it fostered the revived strenuousness of the Cotswold Games; and the indoor man senses its reverberations even in Venice, where the near-Giorgione from Shrewsbury is now on view in the Doges' Palace.

The Trust is a model host and, I believe, a model landlord; and the exemplary trim of its properties might lead a foreign visitor to suppose that where money is concerned the Trust coasts along quite comfortably. The fact, for instance, that it has just spent £2,572 on urgent repairs to the chapel at Petworth would not suggest any great indigence; but Petworth is an example of a property which has a specific and very generous initial endowment. It is, almost literally, one in a thousand; and among the less fortunate properties there are many on which the Trust cannot possibly undertake either repairs or improvements. I hope, therefore, that there may be a ready audience for the appeal on behalf of the Trust which Sir Compton Mackenzie is to broadcast this evening on the B.B.C. Home Service.

## Beginners Beware!

AS one for whom chess is, in itself, quite sufficiently taxing, I have been stunned into admiring silence by an account of the exasperating variant at which Sir Robert Robinson, O.M., F.R.S., is known to excel.

Sir Robert may often be seen, after luncheon, in the window of the Gambit Chess Rooms in the City; but it is in private that he

By ATTICUS

resorts to the yet more complicated problems of the *Kriegspiel* (so named because it was popularised, at the beginning of this century, by officers and cadets of the German Army).

In the *Kriegspiel*, the two contestants use separate boards, each screened from the other; neither, therefore, can see the other's moves. On a third board, likewise screened, an umpire notes the moves made by both players. Intelligence as to the progress of the game is provided by the umpire's replies to the stock question: "Has any pawn been captured?" He, of course, can reply only that a check has been given or a capture made, or that the projected move is not, in fact, practicable.

In re-establishing itself in this country this diabolical pastime may be said to have returned to base, since it was invented in 1899 by an Englishman named Temple.

## Colonial Bayard

NEXT Wednesday, September 14, is the fiftieth anniversary of the death at Dakar of Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza.

Brazza is now acclaimed, and rightly acclaimed, as the Bayard



Savorgnan de Brazza.

of French colonialism. A fine city bears his name; but brighter than the lights of Brazzaville is the legend of its founder's disinterested, pacific and courageous nature. It is as a civiliser, not as a colonist, that Brazza is remembered; and in Libreville, for instance, the story is still told of how, when he returned to Africa after a long and un-wished-for absence, the Africans who owed him their liberty came to kneel at his passage.

It is one of the ironies of colonial history that this incomparable Frenchman should not, by birth, have been French at all, but Roman. And in another aspect of his career there is a sombre parallel with the history of our own times. In 1898 Brazza was recalled to France, at the height of his powers, as the result of a political intrigue; and when, seven years later, the French Government was compelled to reinstate him at the head of a special mission of inquiry into the state of the French Congo, he had only a few months to live. He was, in fact, the protomartyr—as M. Grandval is the latest victim—of

the unhappy tradition in French colonialism by which the man of first-class ability is not given power until it is too late for his reforms to take effect. If Brazza is remembered in Paris next Wednesday, it cannot be with any lifting of the heart.

## Anything to Declare?

AS one who has always been received with indulgent courtesy by the officials of H.M. Customs and Excise, I have sometimes wondered where, and in what circumstances, they show their sterner side.

On inquiring at the Department, I was told that only a small proportion of the total of confiscated goods is taken from passengers of ships and aircraft; it is apparently more common for contraband to be taken from members of the crew—or, indeed, to be found abandoned by persons who had not the nerve to carry their projects through to the end.

Tobacco, I found, was the commodity most in favour with smugglers; troops overseas and (an unhappy conjunction, surely) prisoners in Brixton benefit by the distribution of those which are confiscated.

Watches, spirits, cameras and binoculars are disposed of by wholesalers through the normal trade channels; but in the case of hashish and of improper statuettes, the rules do not of course allow of distribution. The hashish is burnt, and a commando of connoisseurs is on hand to pound the statues to powder.

Proceeds of sales go to the upkeep of the Department; but they contribute, according to the latest figures, less than two per cent of its cost. Pity, therefore, the man in blue and look carefully at his list of dutiable goods.

## From the Plaza

OUTSIDE Spain, bull-fighting arouses extremes of revulsion and devotion and it is from a position of neutrality that I report the fact that bull-fighting is now having its best season within living memory, thus respectively confounding and reassuring those who hope or fear that it will be replaced by football.

The following statistics have just been published in Madrid and I place them at the disposal alike of foe and friend of this manifestation of the Spanish character.

There are 287 permanent bull rings in Spain with a total capacity of approximately 1,400,000, the biggest two being Madrid's 25,000-seat Monumental and Barcelona's 30,000-seat Metropolitan. More fights are held in Barcelona than in any other city, followed by Madrid, Valencia and Seville.

Each year the number of fiestas with full-grown bulls is 230, and with young bulls 280. More than 1,500 full-grown bulls are killed annually, while the number of young bulls "sacrificed in the ring" runs into several thousands.

Five thousand professional matadors are listed and many times that number of picadors and banderilleros. Thirty-one Mexicans top the list of foreign bull-fighters in Spain, followed by nineteen Venezuelans, ten Columbians, six Peruvians, two Englishmen, one American and one German.

## A Tactful Omission

STUDENTS of Japanese theatrical art may like to know that one favourite Kabuki subject—"Yesterday's Enemy, Today's Friend"—has been omitted from the repertory which will be given from tomorrow, at Covent Garden